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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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## INFORMATION REPORT

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1. So-called People's Correspondents are assigned to newspapers in the Soviet Zone of Germany by orders of Walter Ulbricht, deputy Ministerpresident of the German Democratic Republic (DDR). SED (German Socialist Unity Party) functionary Max Schneider was ordered to organize the People's Correspondents' net.
2. People's Correspondents are to explore and influence public opinion. Their official mission was defined by prominent personalities in the Soviet Zone of Germany as follows:
  - a. Bernhard Koenen, SED provincial chairman for Saxony-Anhalt, said that People's Correspondents are to help improve the quality of industrial products, etc., fulfill, even more than fulfill, economic plans, disclose shortcomings in economy and administration and defend against "agents and saboteurs".
  - b. Heinz Ferdinand Padberg, one of the prominent press politicians of the SED and a contributor to the Cominform newspaper called it the mission of the People's Correspondents to unmask unscrupulous elements, organize discussions on labor norms and improvement in quality, contribute to better working standards, disclose and report sabotage plans, should subsidiary enterprises fail to come up to their delivery norms. He called the People's Correspondents the eyes and ears of enterprises.
  - c. Robert Korb, member of the press section of the SED Central Secretariat, at press conferences on 9 and 10 February 1950 said that the People's Correspondents are "the eyes and ears of the SED among the masses", represent public opinion and have to "make the masses understand and execute the economic plans".

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d. Gerhard Bisler, chief of the information department with the DDR Government called it the duty of the People's Correspondents to be in close contact with the information offices. In his opinion the People's Correspondent is the most reliable source of information on the attitude of the population.

e. Following directives by the SED Central Secretariat the missions of the People's Correspondents were defined at conferences held by People's Correspondents from various countries in January 1950 to the effect that People's Correspondents are to explore the attitude of the population and consider means to help execute the plans of the governments.

3. Only persons who prove reliable SED members are eligible for People's Correspondents. Members of other parties in the Soviet Zone of Germany and non-partisan persons are not permitted to work as People's Correspondents.
4. In organization People's Correspondents are attached to editing offices of the SED party press. They work under the political control of the provincial or district organizations of the party.
5. During recent months conferences for People's Correspondents have been held with the various party papers in the Soviet Zone of Germany. After the first central conference held on 26 October 1949 with Ulbricht in the chair, the People's Correspondents of Neues Deutschland met, for example on 17 November 1949 and established the Wilhelm Pieck Collective which is to deal with economic problems. Another conference of People's Correspondents of the Neues Deutschland was held in Rostock (N 55/O 81) on 23 November 1949. About 3,000 People's Correspondents met in Magdeburg (N 53/Y 60) on 15 December 1949 for a meeting of the Volksstimme. People's Correspondents of the Dresden (N 52/D 29) Institute of Technology met in late December 1949 and the People's Correspondents of the Freiheit, a party paper in Saxony-Anhalt, the Laerkische Zeitung, a Brandenburg (N 53/Z 23) paper, and the Saechsische Zeitung held conferences in January 1950.
6. The number of People's Correspondents employed by individual newspapers may be inferred from the following figures:
  - a. The Volksstimme, newspaper in Chemnitz (N 51/K 63), has about 700 People's Correspondents including about 200 laborers, 300 employees, 103 teachers and 25 employees of the Machine Lending Station (MAS).
  - b. The Volksstimme, a Magdeburg paper, has about 1,400 People's Correspondents including about 700 laborers, 550 employees and 100 peasants.
  - c. The Saechsische Zeitung has more than 800 People's Correspondents.

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- d. The Neues Deutschland, central SED paper is said to have about 10,000 People's Correspondents. Only a few of them are women. The number of youths among the People's Correspondents is steadily increasing.
7. People's Correspondents are employees of enterprises, administrative agencies, etc. They do not work in full-time capacity for their newspapers and are not paid on a fixed-salary basis but are paid for their expenses and their published articles.
  8. Considering the large number of People's Correspondents who work for newspapers, only a small portion of the reports can be used by the press. Most of this information is forwarded to offices of the Soviet IS, the Central Control Commission, the SED Provincial Control Commissions (IKK), offices of the Ministry for State Security and to the Information Offices.
  9. People's Correspondents are directed via editing offices of the party press with which they cooperate. People's Correspondents Sections are being established in editing offices. They maintain close contact with offices to which information is distributed.
  10. The importance of the People's Correspondents may be gathered from the fact that they work among the population as "neutral observers". As they do not appear as official party or state agents they can easily explore and steer public opinion and learn of abuses. They therefore represent a dangerous tool of the Politbureau. That the Soviets are aware of their importance is indicated by the fact that Soviet officers were present at almost all conferences of the People's Correspondents either as observers or even as advisors.
  11. The population in the Soviet Zone of Germany views the People's Correspondents with distrust and considers them agents of the government. This prompted Gerhard Eisler to declare that the People's Correspondents are not spies and that special laws are being worked out for their protection.

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☐ Comment:

There is no doubt that the People's Correspondents form an essential link in the internal security system of the DDR. Apart from a control of the population independent of the police they make possible the steering of public opinion.

A previous report\* indicated that a Section for Information Control was established in the Information Offices of the Laender of the DDR. It is assumed that the two "officers in charge of the exploration of public opinion and of propaganda" who are assigned to these information control sections have to cooperate with the People's Correspondents.

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